2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

WOMAN-DAUGHTER

A woman was her daughter's immediate mentor and moral authority throughout her life. Whereas a son entered the company of men and boys after about the age of seven, a daughter returned to her mother's intimate care after the tāli rite. From her mother and from older women of the taravād a girl learned cookery, household and child care, manners, morals, and minor agricultural work. As her daughters came of age a woman took personal pride in their dress, jewelry, and physical attractions. It is said that formerly mothers and other matrilineally related women instructed girls in the arts of love. A woman should spend her life in her mother's household, and she should obey her, taking over from her more and more of the household responsibilities. She should defend her mother in disputes with other women, offer her companionship in old age, and perform funeral and anniversary rites for her soul after her death.

A daughter replaced her mother in the social structure and was expected to resemble her in character, as indeed she often did. A woman's constant care for her daughter's welfare became particularly prominent during the latter's pregnancy and parturition, when the mother must be at hand to offer counsel, good food, and medicines. So long as they respected her and did not encroach on her authority, she should welcome her daughters' husbands with cordiality. If, however, a husband's conduct gravely displeased his mother-in-law, she had the right to ask her daughter to reject him. A dutiful daughter would usually do so; if she refused, the mother might place her case before the kāranavan and request that the husband be dismissed.

Behavior between mother and daughter was usually informal, and they had few secrets from one another. In the privacy of their home and in the absence of men, matrilineally related women of today discuss their affairs and their neighbors freely, sometimes with hilarious mimicry. Mother and daughter were expected to have occasional quarrels. Indeed, there was often a deep undercurrent of rivalry between them which might break out into acrimonious mutual scolding. A daughter should bear patiently her mother's reprimands, but even though she struck her mother in anger her bad conduct would be forgiven more readily than the neglect of a son. A mother would also often try to shield her daughters from anger on the part of the kāranavan, of the mother's own brothers, or even of her sons. Mother and daughters usually maintained unity in disputes with other segments of the taravād, and it was axiomatic that mother and daughters stand united in disputes with other households.

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A man's relationships with his wife's older matrilineal kinswomen were less formally respectful. He might sit with them and exchange village news. They served food to him when he ate in their house and were the persons who usually greeted him first on an evening visit. Although she welcomed them at first out of pride in her daughter's popularity, a woman was likely in time to become jealous of her sons-in-law. If they were tactful they treated her with courtesy and submitted to her whims.

A man tended to avoid his wife's sisters or classificatory sisters who were younger than himself. They treated him with extreme respect similar to that accorded to an older brother, and avoided him as far as possible after they had reached puberty. Incest prohibitions were relevant here: a man was forbidden to have marital relations with two women of the same household, and a woman, with two men from the same household. These prohibitions of course partly served to prevent father-daughter incest. Marriage to a member of a dead or divorced spouse's household was also forbidden.

These rules in general appear to relate to the need to keep minimal potential rivalries between persons of the same sex within the matrilineal household. They were also consistent with the relationship of extreme respect and social distance between the men of a taravād. Tensions between these men were sufficiently acute in any case; they might have been intolerable if two of them had shared a wife. There was also the attitude that sexual relationships should be kept strictly segregated from ties to matrilineal kin. A boy's matrilineal kinsmen were even forbidden to accompany him to his bride's house at the beginning of his first sambandham. Instead he took with him brothers-in-law, unrelated friends, or sometimes a cross-cousin. For marriage was a gay undertaking, a matter of personal pleasure, and only men who stood to each other in a familiar and non-authoritative relationship might have knowledge of each others' marital affairs.

Similarly, the ban on marriage to two women of the same property group is understandable in that Nayar women were open rivals for the attentions of men. Many writers mention this and it is still discernible at the present day. Apparently the respect and amity required of women of the same household was incompatible with such rivalry.

However, the prohibition of relations with two members of the same property group was less stringent than the rule of lineage exogamy. Nambudiri Brahmans are said to have occasionally pressed their attentions on two sisters in spite of their family's reluctance.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Tiyyar
[North Malabar]

Polyandry is forbidden

polygyny more common than among Nayars. Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage is encouraged, the mother's brother's son being the rightful husband of a girl. Divorce, however, appears to be much more common than among Nayars and the domestic group less stable, especially in poor families.

For the post-puberty marriage ceremony the bridegroom comes with his parents and elders to the house of the bride. This contrasts with Nayar marriage, where the youth is accompanied by age-mates, the father and maternal uncles being prohibited from attending. This difference reflects the fact that despite virilocal residence and the comparative infrequency of divorce, North Malabar Nayar marriage is theoretically, as in the south, a contract between individuals as sexual partners and not between lineages. Moreover, the absence of the maternal uncles reflects the sexual jealousy between proximal generations in a Nayar lineage. Among Tiyyars, marriage is primarily a contract between families, a domestic arrangement for procuring food and bringing up children, as well as a sexual tie. The bridegroom's father and *kāraṇavan* jointly give gold to the goldsmith who makes earrings for the bride and places them in the tops of her ears. These rings are the mark of a married woman and are removed at divorce or death.

The feast at the bride's house is paid for jointly by the two parties. After it is over, the bridegroom's *kāraṇavan* pays a bride-price in *panams* (old-fashioned Malayali coins) to the *kāraṇavan* of the bride. This sum is called *kāṇam*, the word used for the sum paid by a Nayar or Tiyyar tenant to his landlord at the start of a period of tenure, nowadays fixed at twelve years. The interest on the *kāṇam* sum is then set off against the annual rent, and returned to the tenant if the property is returned at the end of the stipulated period. The Tiyyar marriage is thus, as Aiyappan (1944, p. 91) says, 'in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her'. The bride's party in return pay a dowry of jewellery and vessels. The bridegroom presents one loin-cloth to the bride and another to her mother. The couple are blessed by elders and depart to the bridegroom's house.

The Tiyyar marriage, therefore, is better defined legally than the Nayar. The *kāṇam* sum (which is of nominal value, in Kottayam fixed at 13½ *panams* or 3 to 5 rupees[1] and paid in the old coins long after their use as currency died out) is, it seems, a symbolic purchase of the husband's *ius in uxorem*. While this persists, he must maintain his wife. Should he lose it by the wife's adultery, his *kāṇam* sum is returned and his wife goes home with her dowry. In theory, he does not acquire *ius in genitricem* in his wife: this, as in all matrilineal societies, remains with her natal kin. Similarly, the father need not by law maintain his children, though he often does so in fact. These may at any time be returned to their *kāraṇavan*.

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. Since the Tiyyar *tāli*-rite died out about twenty years ago, it has been better described in previous literature than by my own informants. I therefore summarize Anantha Krishna Iyer's (1909–12, I, p. 288), Thurston & Rangachari's (1909, VII, pp. 77–9) and Aiyappan's (1944, pp. 159–62) accounts, and then add that of my informants.

The rite must be performed before puberty, on pain of disgrace to the girl's family, and, in ancient times, excommunication from caste. The day was fixed by the astrologer and the ceremony held in the girl's matrilineal ancestral house. The girl was taken to the middle room of the house and secluded for three days as if she had menstruated. Like a menstruous woman, she must abstain from meat and condiments and must not see a tree, a plant, a man, a crow, a dog, or a cat. On the fourth day she bathed in the local pool. At the pool, her brother planted an arrow with its point up, to drive away evil spirits. After bathing, the girl cut a

[1] Thurston & Rangachari report that the North Malabar *kāṇam* sum is 41 *panams*; Aiyappan, however, places it between 8 and 99 *panams*. In Kottayam the bridegroom's mother's brother gives 11½ *panams* to the bride's mother's brother and 3 *panams* to her mother's brother's wife.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Tiyyar

likeliest if his lineage is wealthier than his father, his parents divorced or his *kāranavan* sonless. Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is likeliest if the father has no personal property to leave to his son, if the father has no nephews, or if the husband has quarrelled with his *kāranavan*.

The cross-cousin's claim to become a girl's husband, seen in the *tāli*-rite, must be met at the later marriage ceremony if the girl marries some other man. As the couple leave the house, the girl's cross-cousin steps forward in mock attack, formerly with a sword. He is bought off by the bridegroom with a nominal fee and the couple then pass unmolested.

The tying of the *tāli* by a potential mother-in-law foreshadows the later role of the wife as a subordinate who performs menial tasks under her guidance. Nayar women in North Malabar, too, do housework under the mother-in-law's supervision and customarily behave submissively to her. But their work is not obligatory, and a Nayar wife may decide to live for long periods in her *tarawād* and receive her husband there; unless she denies him sexual rights this will not be seen as adequate grounds for divorce. Though the system is nominally matrilineal, a Tiyyar wife lacks this privilege. At marriage, the payments of dowry and earnest money transfer the rights in her domestic services to her husband's group and place on them the burden of her maintenance. Her desertion would therefore be grounds for divorce by the husband.

In my Kottayam village the barber woman, as well as conducting the 'cooking' rites, tied the *tāli* herself. Informants stated that the *ammāyi* (mother's brother's wife, or prospective mother-in-law) must be present; they knew, moreover, that in some areas she tied the *tāli*. They were unable to explain this difference of custom. Among Tiyyar washermen and barbers themselves, the *tāli* was tied by an old man of the caste not previously related to the girl.

The North Malabar Tiyyar woman's *tāli* may therefore be tied by her prospective mother-in-law, by a woman of a lower, polluting caste or (among barbers and washermen) by a respected elder of the community. It is difficult to find a sociological explanation of why these three persons should be regarded as comparable, i.e. capable of fulfilling the role of initiating girls into womanhood. In the case of the mother-in-law, we have seen that other facts about Tiyyar kinship to some extent explain the form of the rite. Even here, however, it is difficult to explain why it is necessary at all. To what end must a girl observe mock menstrual seclusion before she has menstruated? To what end must she go through a form of marriage, carried out by her prospective mother-in-law, a barber woman, or an elderly man, before she is of age to marry? I revert to these questions after describing the Tiyyar ceremony in South Malabar and Cochin.

Part IV. The Tiyyar Kinship System and *Tāli*-Rite in South Malabar and Cochin

Here, as in the north, Tiyyars rank below Nayars as the highest 'polluting' caste and are tenant-farmers and coconut-growers. But in this area they have, like the other lower castes above serfs, localized, named patrilineal lineages comparable in size and distribution with the matrilineal lineages of the north. The lineage is exogamous; it has a depth of about five to seven generations; is united by the observance of pollutions, by the worship of patrilineal ancestors, of a lineage-god and of snakes, and is sometimes subdivided into property-groups three to five generations deep. The lineage, like the North Malabar Tiyyar and the Nayar matrilineage, is called a *tarawād*.

The internal organization of the local caste group of the *tara* was similar to North Malabar, with a hereditary headman (Tandan) whose powers derived from the *desavari*. The *enangar* relationship was remembered by my informants, though it began to die out about twenty years ago. Each lineage had a single *enangar* lineage through which it was linked to the group. *Enangar* obligations were reciprocal and exclusive. Tiyyar *enangar*, moreover, unlike Nayar,

[South Malabar and Cochin]

must be unrelated: if a man married an *enangar* woman, the *enangar* bond was broken and each lineage must find new, unrelated *enangar*. *Enangar* must be present to witness marriages, to help at funerals, and to represent their lineage's ancestral spirits in the ceremonial food-offerings to spirits on the sixteenth day after, or the anniversary of, a death. The prohibition on marriages between *enangar* acts as an insurance that the *enangar* should not be prejudiced by ties of matrilateral or affinal kinship in their task of bringing to justice members of the linked lineage who offended against caste law. Among Nayars, this was less likely to happen because patrilateral ties were less strong than are matrilateral ties among Tiyyars.

Cutting across their lineage-grouping, the Tiyyars had dispersed, exogamous matrilineal clans, comparable with the clans of the north. My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do not remember their clan-names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin.

The Tiyyars of this area had fraternal polyandry. In this they must be distinguished from the Nayars, since the Tiyyars banned non-fraternal polyandry, while the Nayars of Malabar and Cochin forbade the marriage of one woman to two men of the same lineage, not to mention the same sibling-group. Tiyyar fraternal polyandry died out about twenty years ago. To carry out this marriage, the horoscopes of the girl and the eldest potential husband were compared and the amount of the dowry of jewels and vessels fixed. The bridegrooms went to the girl's house with their kin and *enangar*. Their mother's brother handed clothing for the bride, together with the *kānam* sum as in Norther Malabar, to the mother's brother of the bride. A learned man sang a marriage formula to the effect that the girl of such a lineage was here given to the men of such a lineage, with caste-men and the sacred lamp as witness. He adjured the bridegroom's party to punish her reasonably when necessary, but to 'Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her, bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the third man [the go-between in marriage arrangements] and the *enangan*.' The bride was seated in the marriage hall at the end of a row beside her bridegrooms. The bridegroom's mother and other kinsfolk, and finally their *enangan* and his wife, fed the grooms and then the bride with porridge and with coconut-milk.

The marriage was consummated shortly afterwards in the bride's house, where each husband in order of age went to live with her for one or two weeks. At the end of the honeymoon period she was brought permanently to the husband's house, where she became her mother-in-law's subordinate. The husbands cohabited with her for equal periods in turn by the arrangement of their mother. Even a child might be married to the common wife by the milk-tie, and when he grew up claim conjugal rights in his much older wife. If the family were large and the wife weak in health, a second and even a third woman might, at least in modern times, be married by all the brothers and shared as their common wife. Children called all the fathers *appan*, prefacing distinguishing terms. Sons had equal rights of inheritance. The system mitigated against division of property, but, at least in modern times, if the family became large, brothers might, on the death of their fathers, divide the property and the children and each take one of the wives to live with him in middle life.

Divorce is permitted: a divorced wife returns to her brother's house, whence she may in theory be remarried. To effect a divorce, the eldest husband traditionally took a piece of thread from his loin-cloth, burnt it in two, and blew the two pieces away, saying to the brother of the girl, 'Here is your sister's *ākkāram*.' *Ākkāram* commonly means 'custom', and Aiyappan (1944, p. 184), interprets the phrase, 'Hereby the "thread-tie" [formed by presenting a loin-cloth to the wife at marriage] is snapped, and with it my customary rights over this woman as her husband terminate.' The earnest money was returned to the husband's kin in the

the unconscious hostility of the son to his father appears in beliefs about the spirits of dead *kāraṇavans* of the patrilineal group, which, like Nayar *kāraṇavans'* spirits, are predatory and dangerous beasts to be propitiated with fear. Hostility to the father is however in his lifetime more deeply suppressed than to the Nayar mother's brother, as is male sibling rivalry. Among Nayars, an attempt is made to mitigate the divergent interests of married brothers by reducing to a minimum the claims of their wives and children. Their mutual jealousy is also acknowledged in the prohibition against brothers having sex-relation with the same woman. Among Tiyyars unity of marital interests is ensured by obliging brothers to share a wife. This enforced unity of brothers is the most striking feature of the Tiyyar system and that which contrasts most strongly with the matrilineal castes.

Also among Tiyyars the father-daughter relationship resembles that of the Nayar to his sister's daughter. After she is five to six, a girl's father sternly disciplines her; with the onset of puberty an etiquette of partial avoidance is imposed. The 'possession' of women by serpent-gods of their natal *tarawād*, and the exorcism of demons during pregnancy lead me to suspect that unconscious incestuous wishes towards the father are perpetuated in women as they are towards the mother's brothers (whose images are the serpent gods of the matrilineage) among Nayars and matrilineal Tiyyars.

The Tiyyar system is not, however, a 'regular' patrilineal one. We may suspect this from the existence of matrilineal clans. First, the father's power is not absolute: he shares it with his brothers. Second, the harmony between brothers is, as among Nayars, maintained primarily through their dependence on the mother. Among Nayars men neglect their wives and children for the sake of *tarawād* and mother. Among Tiyyars they forgo sexual satisfaction for the sake of the mother and domestic harmony: the mother controls the wife's actions and dictates the turns by which her sons may sleep with their common wife. This dependence on the mother is reflected, as among Nayars, in devotion to Bhagavadi.

Third, the Tiyyar system resembles the Nayar in the strength of brother-sister ties. The Tiyyar father early surrenders part of the guardianship of his daughters to his sons. This appears at the *tāli*-rite where the father hands his daughter to the mock bridegroom, who returns her at the 'divorce' to her brother. The relationship between a mature but unmarried girl and her brother is, as among Nayars, one of discipline, restraint and partial avoidance. After her marriage and departure to the husband's house, the restraint between a Tiyyar woman and her brother is somewhat relaxed. Should she be divorced or widowed, however, she is returned to her brother.

The disciplinary role of the brother is reflected in the relationship to the mother's brother. He is not, as in many patrilineal systems, an intimate with whom joking and licence are permitted. He is rather a potential father-substitute, and may in fact become one if his sister is divorced or widowed. At his death his sisters' children observe pollution as for a patrilineal kinsmen and, after the deceased's sons but before his younger brothers, make offerings to the spirit. In life his claim as a potential father-in-law resembles that of the Nayar or Tiyyar mother's brother in North Malabar.

Fraternal polyandry strengthens the claims of maternal kin, as it does the ties between a woman and her natal family. For in the traditional family, with a single common wife, there is only one set of maternal kinsfolk for all the children of brothers. Even if a second wife were taken, sororal polygyny or the sororate might perpetuate this situation. Again, it is clear that with fraternal polyandry many Tiyyar women must have remained unmarried and under the permanent guardianship of their brothers. The uncertain prospect of marriage for a woman gives us a further clue to the meaning of the *tāli*-rite.

Having clarified the relationship of women to their natal kinsmen, we can state more clearly the probable unconscious motives for the *tāli*-rite. In all the groups her natal kinsmen retained strong though varying rights in a woman throughout her life. In all, the bond

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

why a man's affection for his own son is neither so intense nor so permanent as his affection for his sister's son.

Also, in matrilineal communities family tradition descends only through the sister's progeny. As the Nāyars formed a fighting aristocracy before the British conquest, they had naturally acquired family tradition, mottoes and arms, which descend of right only in the female line. Hence also a man looks to the training of his sister's sons to keep up his family tradition. All these contribute to an extraordinary, and at first sight inexplicable, tenderness towards the children of one's sister.

Relationship.[1]—Among the Nāyars the classificatory system of relationship is prevalent. When the ties of the family extend not only to one's immediate relations but to all who trace descent from the same ancestress in the female line, it is but natural that the terms of close relationship are used to all who belong to the family. As a matter of fact, the distinction between own brothers and collateral brothers does not exist. All the persons of your own generation older than you are called brothers, and equal respect is shown to them. They are called by such terms as big brother, small brother, etc., *only when they are older than you.* Those who are younger are always called by their names.

All women of your mother's generation are called mothers; those older than your mother are called *Peramma* or *Valiamma*, which means nominal mother or bigger mother, and those younger are called *Kochamma*, little mothers. But unlike among brothers, the distinction between one's mother and other females of the same generation is always maintained. Though respect is paid to all of them alike, own mother is always spoken of as mother, without qualification, and she alone has complete right to command you. Mother's own sisters are also different from those who are only collateral cousins to her. Mother's own brother and all of his generation are called *Ammavan* (literally mother's brother). Here also the distinction between own *Ammavas* and collateral *ammavas* was very slight in Nāyar society till nearly thirty years ago. Now, however, one looks more on one's own *Ammavan* as different from others, which is obviously due to the influence of the authority of direct relationship inculcated through the new system of education.[2]

The mother-in-law has no special name. This is, of course, due to the universal prevalence of first cross-cousin marriage. The mother-in-law is generally addressed

[1] Spencer and Gillen (*Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 58) try to prove that the classificatory terminology to express relationship shows the existence in some earlier time of group marriages. Perhaps it does so when such relationship terms are in use in a patrilineal community. On the other hand, in a matrilineal community such terms have nothing to do with the system of marriage, but only with relationship counted on the mother's side.

[2] Note specially: though all the women of the mother's generation stand in equal relationship, it is only the actual parent that is entitled to be called mother without any qualification to it. All the others are spoken of in comparative terms, as big mother, i.e., elder mother, small mother, i.e., younger mother.

as *Ammavi Amma*, the first word being the same as the wife of the mother's brother, and the second an honorific addition to it. Dr. Rivers, in *Kinship and Social Organisation*, as well as in *Melanesian Society*, has conclusively shown that wherever first-cousin marriage prevails, there the mother-in-law has no special name. His explanation that this is due to the obvious fact that, in most cases, the mother's brother's wife is the same person as the mother-in-law, and that the former position was antecedent to the latter, is fully borne out by the terminology among the Nāyars.

Another relation of importance in the Nāyar family life is the father's sister. She has a special name and has a very special function to perform. In Middle Travancore she is called *Appachi*. Her importance varies according to the status of the father's family. If the father's family is one of greater importance than one's own, then the father's sister is a person to be consulted on various matters with regard to the child. In any case she should be the first to visit the new-born child. This is called "*Kannom Kalcha*." In the marriage ceremony also she has a prominent place.

Enangar.—The whole of Nāyar family life used to be based, though this has decayed of late, on the close relationship with one or more other families, spoken of as *Enangar* or Allies. A *Tharawad* with its *Enangars* formed *a social group* rarely marrying outside its fold and generally arranging all festivities and ceremonies between themselves. Neither funeral rites, nor marriage ceremony, nor even any one of the hundred other minor things which go to make up the ordinary life of a Nāyar family, can take place without the co-operation, or at least the presence, of a member from the *Enangar* or allied families. The *Enangar* families are always of the same sub-caste, with a right to eat with you and enter any part of your house.

The *Enangar* system is evidently a kinship organisation, forming an inter-marrying class. The question of its origin is a very difficult one. The prevalent opinion is that it originated in the days when Nāyars fought and farmed in alternate months, when a kinship organisation of some sort was very necessary for safety and success. This organisation has become very lax of late, though it cannot in any way be said to be dying out.

Marriage Restrictions.—The marriage restrictions prevalent among the Nāyars have nothing much peculiar from the rest of the Hindu society. The bride must always be younger than the man, and must in strict orthodoxy belong to the same generation as his. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter, who is to him as his own sister. All his sisters, own and collateral, together with ladies of a previous generation in his family, form a legal incestuous group. A man has, therefore, to marry either entirely out of the circle of his relations, or from among his *cross-cousins*.

Cross-cousin marriage[1] is the orthodox custom. Your maternal uncle's

[1] By cross-cousins I mean children of brother and sister. The relationship is expressed by the word *Machuna*, which is, it should be noticed, the same as in the Toda language. Among